United Nations A/70/PV.103

General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

103rd plenary meeting
Monday, 13 June 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Mass shooting in Orlando, Florida

The President: I should like to express my deepest sympathies to the host country and the people of the United States of America after yesterday's horrific mass shooting in Orlando, Florida. The loss of so many innocent lives through such an act of barbarism is extremely upsetting, and I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims. This attack demonstrates once again the need for each and every member of the Assembly to continue the work to defeat hatred, counter discrimination and prevent violent extremism.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/70/722/Add.7 and A/70/722/Add.8, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/70/722/Add.6, Yemen and Libya have made the payments necessary to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in documents A/70/722/Add.7 and A/70/722/Add.8?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the seventy-first session

The President: I now invite Members, in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the seventy-first session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to resolution 33/138 of 19 December 1978, the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session should be elected from among the Asia-Pacific States.

In this connection, I have been advised that the Chair of the Asia-Pacific States for the month of May 2016 has informed the Secretariat that His Excellency Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis of Cyprus and His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji are the two candidates for the presidency of the General Assembly for the seventy-first session.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

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Ballot papers are now being distributed and the voting has thus begun. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers that have been distributed and to write the name of one of the candidates and not the name of the candidate's country, for whom they wish to vote. Ballot papers containing more than one name or containing only the name of a country will be declared invalid.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Guido Crilchuk (Argentina), Ms. Lachezara Stoeva (Bulgaria), Mr. Mustapha Kamal Rosdi (Malaysia), Mr. Ilan Cohen (Netherlands), Mr. Samson Itegboje (Nigeria) and Mrs. Katalin Oanță (Romania) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.50 a.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	7
Number of valid ballots:	185
Abstentions:	1
Number of members voting:	184
Required simple majority:	93
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Peter Thomson (Fiji)	94
Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis (Cyprus)	90

Having obtained the required majority, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson was elected President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

The President: I wholeheartedly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly for the seventy-first session, and invite him to take the floor.

Mr. Thomson (Fiji): I thank you, Mr. President, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for your wise leadership and the excellent example you have forever set us here at the United Nations. I look forward to working with you both over the next three months in preparation for the seventy-first session.

I thank my honourable colleague Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis so much for the fairness of our contest and the gentlemanly conduct that he exhibited throughout. He would have been a credit to the General Assembly and the United Nations had that small majority tipped his way rather than mine. I wish him well in all his future endeavours, and I thank him.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Fiji for putting me forward for this post. It is a great honour that it chose to put one of its own up for this high office, and that that person was me. I should like to thank my Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Fiji ambassadors overseas and, especially, the staff of the Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations. I also take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of Fijians who serve in the Blue Helmets and Blue Berets as United Nations peacekeepers around the world. To them, also, I say "Thank you for your service".

I should also like to take this moment to thank my brothers and sisters from the Pacific small island developing States (SIDs). This was not just a Fiji candidacy; it was a Pacific SIDs candidacy, and this is the first time in history that one of the Pacific SIDs countries has put up someone who has succeeded in being elected as President of the General Assembly. It is a great moment for the Pacific islands, and I thank everyone for their support. The Pacific SIDs bring special perspectives on climate change and oceans issues, and Assembly members can expect me to be vocal on those in the seventy-first session.

But let me say that, while my presidency is supported by the SIDs and the Group of 77, I want to assure everyone that it is for the whole house. We are bound together not only by the Charter of the United Nations, but also by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which is a universal Agenda. That is what lies ahead for us in the seventy-first session — the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is the high purpose of the seventy-first session to achieve momentum on that Agenda. By the end of the seventy-first session, we must be accountable; we must have progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. That is going to require transforming systems. It is going to mean overcoming structural and intellectual barriers. We have to implement the Agenda. It is there for the good of our children and our grandchildren. Without it, their future will be in jeopardy; with it, we will have a sustainable place on this planet.

On a personal note, I should like to thank the two gentlemen sitting beside me at the Fiji desk this

morning. They are the two most senior diplomats that Fiji has ever produced. Ambassador Satya Nandan was for many years the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority and was also an Under-Secretary-General here at the United Nations. Sitting next to him is Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, the President of Fiji until last year. Ratu Epeli and my fathers fought in the trenches at the pointy end of the Pacific war, and our families have been linked ever since. It is a great honour for me that he is sitting with me here today. He began his career here at the United Nations as a First Secretary in the early 1970s. Tonight, we will sit down at the Fiji Mission, we will drink Cava together and we will sing a lot of Pacific island songs. Anybody who feels like it is welcome to come along and join us there.

I thank my wife, daughter and sister, who are sitting in the top seats in the Hall, so much for being here. If you see the three of them, and you know that my grandchildren are all girls, you will know I am a He for She and why I stand for gender parity.

In conclusion, I pledge to serve the General Assembly and the United Nations at all times in a spirit of fidelity and commitment to the common good, and always in accord with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I would like to thank both candidates in today's election. To His Excellency Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis of Cyprus, I wish to express my genuine admiration for his strong candidacy. I also wish him all the best for his future endeavours.

To His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations. He brings to this position extensive experience of working directly with matters of rural development and engaging for many years in multilateralism and international affairs. He is exceptionally well attuned to the functioning and culture of the Assembly, and I have no doubt that he will lead this pre-eminent world body in a truly dedicated and able manner. Together with my team, I stand ready to support him however I can as he prepares to assume the presidency on 13 September.

In the meantime, there is still much work to be done during the final three months of the seventieth session. The whole range of important processes will come to what I hope will be a successful conclusion, including Security Council reform, the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, preparations for the high-level event on large movements of migrants and refugees in September, and the important work of the revitalization of the General Assembly. I will also hold my third high-level thematic debate on human rights on 12 and 13 July, as well as further informal dialogues with candidates for the position of Secretary-General, if necessary.

I am determined to leave behind a strong General Assembly that all the 193 Member States and the people of the world can look up to and depend upon. I am confident that our efforts to drive this organ forward and make it more transparent, more inclusive and more effective will be built upon under his Mr. Thomson's stewardship. I therefore once again wish him the very best during the seventy-first session of the Assembly.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I am delighted to offer my warmest congratulations to the new President-elect of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, Permanent Representative of Fiji. He will have an opportunity to build on the extraordinary progress we have seen under the able leadership of the current President, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark. At the same time, I would like to thank and appreciate the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis for his spirit of fair competition and his commitment to democratic principles. I wish him continuing success.

At this time, I would like to take this opportunity to particularly commend President Lykketoft for his many important initiatives. Already this month, the Assembly has adopted an action-oriented Political Declaration on ending AIDS (resolution 70/266, annex). He has convened thematic debates on pressing global challenges and he has travelled to the front lines of crisis. He also brought new transparency to the selection process for the next Secretary-General, which has drawn unprecedented and very welcome attention around the world. I thank him for his outstanding contribution.

President-elect Thomson brings a broad perspective to his new post. He has years of experience in the environmental arena, having worked both for his Government and in the private sector. During his posting as Permanent Representative, he made his mark as Chairman of the Group of 77 and China. He also gained extensive knowledge of the United Nations development system as Chair of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the

United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the United Nations Office for Project Services. He was also a Vice-President of the General Assembly from 2010 to 2011.

In addition to his staunch commitment to development, the new President-elect brings the very valuable perspective of a small island developing State to this post. He is a staunch advocate of both sustainable development and action on climate change. I count on him to help us carry out both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

I am confident that he will seek the views of others to forge consensus. As the new President-elect once said, "Progress at the United Nations emanates not from adversarial corners, but from cooperation by those who meet in the middle." I invite the Assembly to join me in congratulating the new President-elect and wishing him all success in the important year ahead.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): First of all, we would like to express our condemnation of the terrorist attacks that recently took place in the Middle East. We also condemn the terrorist attack in Orlando, Florida, on 12 June. We express our deepest sympathy and condolences to all the victims and their families and we wish a quick recovery to those who were injured.

It is a great honour and privilege to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States with words of gratitude for entrusting the representative of a country that belongs to our Group with the honour of being the next President of the General Assembly. I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his election to such a prominent post.

We are aware that the stewardship of the President of the General Assembly is of crucial importance to tackling the challenges that the United Nations is facing. We are confident that, based on his professional qualities and vast experience in the United Nations arena, the President-elect of the General Assembly will make significant contributions to the success of the upcoming session of the General Assembly.

Let me also express my sincere gratitude to President Lykketoft for the excellent work he has done so far and wish him well in the next few months of his continuing presidency during the seventieth session of the General Assembly. I would like to commend the initiatives taken so far by President Lykketoft for peace and security, the promotion of sustainable development, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), human rights, and governance, including transparency and accountability of the United Nations. It should also be noted that President Lykketoft ably conducted two rounds of informal dialogues for the position of the next Secretary-General, in April and June of this year.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, I would like to pledge our full support to the President-elect and wish him every success in carrying out his duties during the seventy-first session. Many challenges undoubtedly lie ahead. But together, with the cooperation of all States Members of the United Nations and the leadership of Mr. Peter Thomson, we can continue working to ensure a more effective and efficient United Nations that will make the world a safer and more prosperous place.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria): It is my privilege to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States and to extend my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji on his election as President of the General Assembly for its seventy-first session.

Ambassador Thomson's extensive diplomatic career and knowledge of the United Nations — gained both as the Permanent Representative of his country to the United Nations, serving as the 2013 Chair of the Group of 77 and China, and as President of the Council of the International Seabed Authority, inter alia — will be a great asset to the work of the General Assembly during its seventy-first session. The seventy-first session will be instrumental in building upon the achievements of the seventieth session and ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), poverty eradication, gender equality, peacemaking reform and environmental protection.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend the gratitude of the members of the Group of Eastern

European States to President Mogens Lykketoft for his excellent work and dedicated service during the seventieth session of the General Assembly. The seventieth session has been historic in many ways, not only for marking the seventieth anniversary of the Organization, but also for enabling historic achievements: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to name but two. President Lykketoft has also been instrumental in the implementation of resolution 69/321, thus ensuring a more transparent process and more active role of the General Assembly in the selection of the next Secretary-General.

President Lykketoft can count on the full support of the members of the Eastern European Group in the remaining months of his tenure as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, and I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

I would conclude by pledging the full support of the members of the Group of Eastern European States to the President-elect and wish him all the best in carrying out his duties as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Zambia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Ms. Kasese-Bota (Zambia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States. The African Group would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji on his election as President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session. The African Group is appreciative of the current moment, a very crucial period for the President of the General Assembly as we implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and further redefine the processes of implementation, as well as its review and follow-up. The Group is optimistic that the President-elect will maintain the momentum of the Assembly on its path of galvanizing stakeholder partnerships to deliver on the Goals set in the 2030 Agenda.

The historic signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change in this house in April reaffirmed the political will of our respective Governments and leadership to combat environmental challenges. We are hopeful that through the able leadership of the President-elect, we will see galvanized support, including that of the private sector, civil society, academia, youth, women and other stakeholders to rally behind the global efforts to combat climate change and implement the Sustainable Development Agenda, with particular attention to all three pillars, as anchored in the already-adopted document of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The African Group would like to urge the President-elect to renew and reinvigorate the ongoing intergovernmental efforts on the revitalization of the General Assembly and reform of the Security Council. It is our fervent view that the General Assembly at its seventy-first session will build on the progress made at preceding sessions in the reform of the Security Council and lead to an expedited conclusion of that reform in order to address the historic injustice of Africa's exclusion from important decision-making in the peace and security arena.

Our world today continues to be confronted by various challenges of global reach and impact. Those include poverty, hunger, underdevelopment in education and health services, insufficient and expensive energy, climate change, rising sea levels, armed conflict — including emerging threats to peace and security, such as transnational organized crime — radicalization, terrorism, piracy and human trafficking. It is the African Group's hope that the President-elect will proactively work towards actions that will address those global challenges.

I would like to conclude by assuring the President-elect of Africa's unwavering support to his execution of the mandate of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

The President: I now the give the floor to the representative of Barbados, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Marshall (Barbados): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), I have the honour to extend my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Fiji to the United Nations, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Ambassador Thomson's diplomatic skills and rich experience at the United Nations will certainly serve him well as he steers the work of the General Assembly. He will assume his post as the international community continues its implementation of and follow-up to the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), even as we work to find solutions to age-old problems and new threats. Ambassador Thomson can be assured of the full cooperation of GRULAC in the execution of his mandate.

Before I conclude, Mr. President, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States wishes to express its deep appreciation to you on your vigorous execution of the presidency during the seventieth session. We look forward to your continued leadership until the conclusion of your mandate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Ms. Stener (Norway): On behalf of the Western European and other States Group, let me extend our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

As the current Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, and with a distinguished career in Government and diplomacy, Ambassador Thomson brings with him considerable experience and wisdom, to the benefit of the General Assembly. Through his many leadership roles, including here at the United Nations, he has demonstrated strong dedication and commitment to cooperation among nations and high regard for the role of the United Nations in the complex global arena. We know that he will guide the General Assembly wisely at its seventy-first session, at the core of which will be, among other crucial topics, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). If those efforts are to be successful, we must take a multistakeholder approach that includes active civil-society participation in the United Nations. We wish the President-elect every success; he can rely on the full support of the Western European and other States Group.

At the same time, we would also like to express to you, Sir, our deep appreciation for your excellent work throughout the current session of the General Assembly. We thank you for the dedication and leadership that you have demonstrated, and commend you for your efforts to bring greater transparency and accountability to the office of the President of the General Assembly, as we look to the incoming President to continue that good work. We look forward to working with you, Sir, during the remaining months of your term of office.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the host country.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, the host country of the United Nations, I have the honour of warmly welcoming the election of His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. The United States also wishes to express its thanks to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his dedicated service as President of the Assembly at its seventieth session. My Government appreciates the fact that Ambassador Thomson is willing to take on this role as the substantive work resulting from the momentous seventieth session of the General Assembly begins.

Together, we must work to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, which recognize that peace and security are essential components of development. We must carry forward the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit and enter a new era of humanitarian assistance, and we must robustly advance the dignity and rights of all persons without discrimination. The success of these initiatives and our work as a group of united nations will be possible only with robust, free and independent civil society engagement and a truly all-hands, multi-stakeholder approach.

Today we elect a new President of the General Assembly, a symbol of and forum for the hope of advancing peace. Yesterday in my country, a terrorist killed over 50 innocents and injured many others at a gay bar in Florida. There is perhaps no greater contrast than the ambition of the project that unites us today and the terror that my country experienced yesterday. Many representatives here have expressed their condolences. We are grateful. Many of them have condemned terrorism. We join them. But that is not enough.

My friends, we must do better. We each can contribute more than condolences and condemnations. Dignity should not be so hard to protect. Here, it too often is. In this Hall, every time it is up for consideration there is a pitched fight over the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the one General Assembly resolution that references it — a resolution that, I would note, does nothing more than urge States to protect the right to life of all persons and investigate killings. There is an ongoing pitched fight over whether it is appropriate to include sexual orientation in that protection.

Further, we find ourselves constantly battling to incorporate the voices of the LGBTI community in the vital work of this organ. If we are united in our outrage in the killing of so many — and we are — let us be equally united around the basic premise of upholding the universal dignity of all persons regardless of who they love, not just around condemning the terrorist who killed them. Protecting the dignity of human beings in all of their diversity will be the work that leads to a more peaceful United Nations. May what happened in Orlando only underscore the urgency and imperative of this issue, and may that be the work of the General Assembly at its next session, the next President of this body, and every Member State represented in this Hall. The best version of our nations is one that embraces all the people in it. The same is true for these United Nations.

The United States looks forward to working with President-elect Thomson and we wish him every success in carrying out his duties.

The President: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 4.

Drawing of lots for the seating protocol for the seventy-first regular session

The President: As announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*, we will now proceed to the drawing of lots to determine the Member State that will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the seventy-first session. In accordance with the established practice, the Secretary-General or, in his absence, the Deputy Secretary-General draws the name of one Member State from a box containing the names of the States members of the General Assembly. The delegation whose name has been drawn will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall, and the other countries will follow in English alphabetical order. The same order will be observed in the Main Committees.

I now invite the Deputy Secretary-General to proceed with the drawing of lots.

Having been drawn by lot by the Deputy Secretary-General, Bolivia (Plurinational State of) was chosen to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the seventy-first session.

Agenda item 6

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the seventy-first session

The President: I should now like to consult members with a view to proceeding to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly,

> "The Vice-Presidents shall be elected after the election of the Chairmen of the six Main Committees referred to in rule 98, in such as way as to ensure the representative character of the General Committee".

It is my understanding that, since the elections of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees will conform with decision 68/505, of 1 October 2013, on the "Interim arrangement on the pattern for the rotation of the chairs of the Main Committees of the General Assembly", it will not have an impact on the geographical distribution of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the representative character of the General Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly therefore agrees to proceed to elect the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we shall now proceed to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

In accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of the annex to resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session shall be elected according to the following pattern: six representatives from African States, four representatives from Asia-Pacific States, one representative from Eastern European States, three representatives from Latin American and Caribbean States; two representatives from Western European and other States; and five representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council.

In accordance with paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly by

secret ballot will be dispensed with when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled.

We shall proceed accordingly.

I shall now read out the names on the slate of candidates:

African States: the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Mauritania, Nigeria and Zambia.

Asia-Pacific States: Bangladesh, Nepal, Solomon Islands and Turkmenistan.

Eastern European States: Armenia.

Latin American and Caribbean States: Bahamas, Belize and El Salvador.

Western European and other States: Belgium and Germany.

Since the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled in each region, I declare those candidates elected, in addition to the five representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The following States have therefore been elected to vice-presidencies of the General Assembly for the seventy-first session: Armenia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belize, Belgium, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, El Salvador, Germany, Mauritania, Nepal, Nigeria, Solomon Islands, Turkmenistan and Zambia.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the States that have just been elected Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

I wish to inform members that, immediately after the adjournment of this meeting, consecutive meetings of the First Committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Second, Third and Sixth Committees will be held in the Hall to elect their respective Bureau members.

I also wish to remind members that the elections of the Chairperson of the Fifth Committee and other members of the Bureau have been postponed to this afternoon as announced in the *Journal*.

I wish to remind members that after the election of the Chairpersons of the Six Main Committees, the General Committee of the General Assembly for the seventy-first session will then be fully constituted in accordance with rule 38 of the rules of procedure.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.